

The Arts of

**ID** *Forgery*

&

**COUNTERFEITING**

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## **Introduction**

# **The Uses of Homemade Documents**

A person intent on creating a new identity will have to produce numerous types of paper documents such as birth certificates, college transcripts, degrees, reference letters, and the like. It is often impossible to obtain real documents in the name of the new identity.

This leaves the person who wishes to change identities with two options. The first option is to purchase false documents from one of the numerous purveyors who advertise in the national tabloids and magazines. False-document sellers can also be consulted on the Internet.

The first problem with purchasing documents via this method is that the quality of these documents is always in doubt. The second problem is that many of these businesses operate outside the laws controlling the manufacture and sale of false documents.

These sellers can be raided by the police or FBI at any time. Even worse, the mail these businesses receive may be subjected to what is known as a "mail cover." During a mail cover, the name and return address of all incoming mail is recorded. Those people attempting to order from the business would wind up with their name in an investigator's database, and they might face a visit from the police at a later time.

People who want to establish a new identity need to become adept at the skill of document forgery in the early stages of their identity creation. These forged documents can allow the identity-seeker to obtain real, genuine identity documents from government agencies and other places.

A false birth certificate may allow the acquisition of a valid driver's license from a state motor vehicle department. A false transcript can be used to register for classes at a university, and maybe even obtain a scholarship. A fake employment reference letter can be used to obtain a good job in the new identity.

A proficiency in document forgery allows the seeker of a new identity to create the foundation of his alternate self at home, without drawing the attention of curious busybodies. Forgery is easily learned by most people, and the more a forger practices, the better are the documents that can be produced. Eventually, the diligent forger will be able to turn out documents that only a skilled document examiner could prove to be fakes, and then only after an extensive examination.

Good-quality forgeries are almost never detected by people who commonly examine identification documents. A good-quality forgery will bear certain common characteristics, regardless of what kind of document it is. These characteristics are:

- The forgery bears a close resemblance to the real document.
- All numbers on a real document are present on the forgery.
- All seals, stamps, and signatures on the real document appear on the forgery.
- The paper used for the forgery is identical to the paper used for the real document.

In the remainder of this book, we will lay out a step-by-step description of how professional forgers and counterfeiters are able to produce high-quality false documents that have all of the above characteristics. We will also see how, when, and where these documents can be used without fear of detection.

One final word of explanation may be necessary here. The author, for the sake of simplicity, refers to the counterfeiters and forgers whose procedures are outlined in this book in the masculine. This is not meant to imply that women are not capable of practicing the art of document forgery. Forgery is truly equal opportunity.

# Chapter One

## Old-Fashioned Forgery

Forgery has its roots in the printer's trade. The development of paper documents and the printing press led to the earliest counterfeiting. Interpol, the International Police Agency, was first developed to combat the widespread trafficking in forged bank notes.

Consider the faith that we place in paper documents. The deed to a house or title to a car is really nothing more than a sheet of paper. We accept this sheet of paper as proof of ownership of the house or car concerned. Stock and bond certificates are proof of assets and can be used as collateral to obtain loans from banks.

An applicant for a job furnishes a college transcript and reference letters from former employers with his application. These documents are taken as proof that the job applicant has the skills and background necessary to do the job.

Paper documents can confer wealth, status, and privilege upon an individual. If you are an American citizen you can prove that fact with a paper document in the form of a birth certificate, voter registration card, or passport.

The ultimate paper document to counterfeit is money. This explains the great lengths to which all nations go to manufacture currency that is difficult to counterfeit. If a nation's currency is too widely counterfeited, no one will accept it and the country could go bankrupt.

Counterfeiting concerns are one reason the U.S. government has introduced new paper currency. Counterfeiters had become so adept at making passable knockoffs of the older-style bills that a serious problem was developing. The new bills incorporate many new features that make counterfeiting much harder.

Even very simple paper documents such as corporate letterheads incorporate a variety of devices to ensure their authenticity. Think about the following situation for a moment. If you received a letter offering you a job with a large, well known national company on a plain sheet of white paper, how would you react to it? Assume that the letter came in an envelope with no logo, as well. You would immediately begin questioning if the letter was real, or sent by someone playing a joke on you.

Now consider receiving the same letter, but this time on paper that appears to bear the corporate letterhead of the company. The envelope it arrives in bears the same logotype. This document now bears the stamp of authenticity. Corporate and government agency letterheads and logos are simply authentication devices. These simple images let the recipient of a communication from a company or government department know that it is authentic.

It is common practice for official documents to be typewritten, as opposed to handwritten. This is another authentication device we rely on. A handwritten job reference is much less impressive than a typewritten one, even if it is done on official letterhead.

High-quality paper is another anti-forgery device. Thirty or forty years ago, the general public did not have access to high quality parchment paper or papers with fancy, multicolored borders. These papers were employed by government agencies and some businesses to safeguard and authenticate important correspondence. College transcripts, birth certificates, stock and bond certificates, commendations and other documents are all commonly printed on special parchment or other high-quality papers.

The next two authentication devices used are the stamp and embossed seal. An ink stamp that says "certified copy" or "confidential document" adds another layer of protection

against counterfeiters. Ink stamps are often done in red or purple to foil those who would use a simple copying machine to counterfeit a document.

The embossed seal involves pressing the official seal or other image into the paper. The seal is both visible and can be felt by rubbing the fingers over it. Embossed seals are commonly used on birth certificates, awards and college transcripts. An embossed seal is a more secure anti-counterfeiting device than a simple stamp because the counterfeiter must get an embossing tool made with the image to be pressed into the paper.

Old-fashioned forgery relies on the forger's ability to closely duplicate a real document. The first step in forgery often involves making a simple photocopy of the document to be forged. The development of the photocopier was a tremendous leap forward for the forger. As copier quality has improved, many simple documents can be forged just by photocopying. In fact, copy shops call this high-quality copier output "copy printing."

You can test this for yourself by copying a simple document; say a reference letter or other business correspondence. In many instances, a well-made copy cannot be distinguished from the original. In this example, you are not technically committing forgery, because nothing was changed on the photocopied document.

The old-fashioned forger's tools will consist of the following items:

- A Photocopier
- Correction fluid (also known as "Whiteout")
- Non-reproducing blue pen
- Parchment paper
- Ink stamps
- Embossing tools and dies
- Pushpins
- Light table
- Rub-on transfer letters
- Laminating machine
- Document samples
- Paper cutter
- Glue stick
- Date stamp
- Rulers and triangles
- Supply of pens
- High-quality scissors
- Circle templates

Anyone attempting forgery of any of the documents mentioned in the following chapters would obtain these supplies before beginning the process. They could purchase most of these items at an office supply store, artist's supply shop, or a stationery store that carries supplies for "graphic arts."

It would cost a person attempting to forge documents about \$200 to assemble a basic old-fashioned forgery outfit. This does not include the cost of a photocopier, which it is assumed they would have access to. Top-of-the-line machines that can be used at a local quick-copy shop are much better than the small machines often sold for home use.

In later chapters, we will examine in detail how the old fashioned techniques of

forgery are used to turn out all sorts of interesting documents. But now, we need to take an overview of the new tools of forgery—the personal computer and its associated support programs and devices. Most documents can be forged either by using the old-fashioned way or by using the new technology. Which method is used is a matter of choice, talents, and resources.

# Chapter Two

## Computer Forgery

The last ten years have seen personal computers grow into devices that can give an individual enormous computing power and graphics capabilities. The development of the Pentium processor, along with numerous publishing software programs, means that savvy computer users can put together documents on screen that are visually stunning, and look as if they had been done by a professional graphics company.

Until recently, the one drawback to using a computer for forgery of anything but the most rudimentary of documents was the poor-quality output of most printers. Text documents came out fine, but documents with a lot of graphics and color were often of poor quality.

Regardless of how good something looks on the screen, if the printer output is not good, the document will not pass inspection. Today, however, new, affordable printers are able to print up very high-quality graphics and color-intensive documents.

The computer can offer many excellent benefits to the document forger. The first is that nearly all phases of the operation can be completed in the privacy of his home. With computer forgery, there is no need to go to the local copy shop. With the proper set-up, nearly any identification document or certificate can be produced at home.

The second is that each document the computer forger turns out is a crisp original. Computer forgery eliminates the problem of excessive photocopying. Sometimes, an original document must be copied a number of times to remove imperfections and blemishes before a suitable work copy is produced. Computer forgery eliminates this problem.

The third benefit of computer forgery is that the forger can build up his proficiency at manufacturing a wide variety of different documents much faster than he can via the old-fashioned way. Press a few buttons on the keyboard, and the computer forger can go from birth certificates to college transcripts.

The computer is also very forgiving of errors. If a mistake is made on a document that is being altered, the computer forger can simply go back, recall the document that is being altered, and start again. When the document is printed out, it will be a flawless original.

So, given all these pluses for computer forgery, what is the drawback? The drawback is money. Creating a system to forge documents with a computer will cost at least \$2,000, maybe more. If the aspiring document forger has the cash, however, the computer route is definitely the way to go.

This book assumes that the reader has little or no knowledge of computers and computer forgery techniques. The discussion that follows will be very basic. Those readers with knowledge in this area may want to skip ahead to the next chapter.

Forging documents with a computer requires a computer (naturally), and software programs that allow the manipulation of documents. Also needed is a way to load ("import") paper documents into the computer, and a printer to print out the desired forgeries.

The following is a list of items the computer forger would need to assemble. After the list we will have more detailed comments on each item.

## Computer Forgery Supplies List

- A Pentium-based personal computer with at least 32 megabytes of RAM and a 2.1-gigabyte hard drive
- A high-resolution flatbed scanner
- Optical character and image manipulation software
- A high-resolution ink-jet or color laser printer
- Supply of high-quality papers
- Supply of original documents
- A 24X CD-ROM drive

In computer jargon, the computer and other physical devices are known as hardware. The programs that run the computer and enable you to accomplish useful work are known as software.

Computers are defined by how quickly they operate, the size of a single file they can work with at one time, and the total amount of memory space available. The quickness of operation is determined by the microprocessor, or "chip," that runs the machine. This is the heart of the computer.

All computers now use a type of chip called a Pentium chip. This chip is available in two varieties, either the Pentium or the Pentium2. In addition, different types of these two chips are available, based on how quickly they process data. This processing speed is expressed in megahertz (MHz).

Pentium chips are available in speeds up to 200 MHz, and Pentium2 chips have speeds from 200 to 400 MHz. The faster the chip, the faster the computer can run its programs. A computer forger would purchase a system with as fast a processor as he could afford.

Random access memory (RAM) represents the maximum file size the computer can work with at anyone time. The greater the RAM, the larger the file that can be manipulated. This is a very important consideration in computer forgery. Depending on the detail level of the document, the forger could be working with very large file sizes.

Many computers come with 16 megabytes of RAM as a standard. For computer forgery purposes, this is not enough. A minimum of 32 megabytes of RAM is necessary, and 48 megabytes is even better. Once again, the computer forger would purchase as much RAM as he could afford.

The output of the computer would be viewed on a monitor. Most forgers prefer a 15-inch monitor as a minimum. Larger monitors are available, and if the aspiring computer forger could afford a 17- or 19-inch monitor, he would likely purchase one of these.

The computer would have an operating system, most likely Windows95 from the Microsoft Corporation. The operating system acts as a master program. It controls what is seen on the screen, manages other programs installed later, and allows the computer to be easily used. The operating system would come preloaded on the computer with other programs.

The scanner allows the forger to import documents into the computer. The scanner is very important in computer forgery because the quality of the scanner determines the quality of the final document that can be produced.

Scanners come in two varieties, sheet-fed and flatbed. A sheet-fed scanner allows the insertion of a document at the top. A mechanism in the scanner rolls the



document through and expels it at the bottom. A flatbed scanner allows the document to be laid horizontally on the scanner. The scanner element moves to read the document.

Flatbed scanners are preferable for forgery purposes for two reasons. The first is that the paper remains stationary during the scanning process. This makes for a better quality scan, especially if the original document has creases or other minor blemishes in it. The second reason a flatbed scanner is better is that you can clean the scanning glass easily with glass cleaner and a cloth. A sheet-fed scanner cannot be cleaned very easily.

The forger would need a high-resolution scanner. A high resolution scanner will scan at a minimum of 600 to 1200 dots per inch (dpi). To understand why this is important, we need to differentiate between the way a computer records an image and the way a camera sees an image.

Whereas a camera sees an image as continuous patterns of reflected light, a computer breaks that image down into small dots known as pixels. The more pixels per square inch, the sharper the image the computer will make. The "dpi" rating is thus a numerical measurement of how many of these pixels there are per square inch.

Scanners will give two measurements of resolution. The first is the "optical resolution." This is the important number, representing the highest resolution at which the scanner can "see" the document. A second number will also be listed, called the "maximum resolution." This number is based upon the computer guessing where additional image detail should go, and placing it on the image. This resolution is dubious at best.

First, "maximum resolution" creates enormous file sizes that can easily exceed even 48 megabytes of RAM. Second, scanning a document at this theoretical maximum will take a very long time, and the improvement in image quality will be marginal at best. The other criterion the computer forger needs to consider when choosing a scanner is the data-handling capability of the machine. Scanners come in 24-, 30-, and 36-bit modes. The higher the bit rating, the more easily the scanner can reproduce the various subtle color shadings on a document. He would need to choose a 30-bit scanner as a minimum, and if he can afford a 36-bit scanner, it would be a worthwhile investment:

When documents are imported into the computer via a scanner, the computer sees the imported document as a graphic, even if it is a page of text. A software program known as an optical character recognition (OCR) program is needed to allow you to make changes and alterations to these documents.

For example, if a computer forger has imported a birth certificate into his computer and wants to change the name on the certificate, he would need to use an OCR program to erase the old name and then add the new name.

Two of the most popular OCR programs are Textbridge (by the Xerox Corporation) and OmniPage. The computer forger would need to purchase the latest, full stand-alone versions of these programs. Which program he purchases is a matter of personal taste.

He would need to purchase the full versions of these programs even if the scanner he purchases comes with one of these programs or a similar program. This is due to the fact that the versions that are supplied with scanners are usually stripped-down editions of the entire program. These limited feature editions would allow him to do some, but not all, of the changes he needs to perform on his documents. The full versions will also include a detailed instruction manual or disk that the stripped-down versions do not have.

The other program that computer forgers make extensive use of is the photo

manipulation program. They would do well to use the latest version of a program called "Photoshop" because, in my opinion, no other image manipulation program comes close to matching Photoshop's versatility and ease of use.

Now, let's explore the difference between the image manipulation program and the OCR program. Both programs can be used to do some of the same things, such as remove unwanted text from a page. The difference is in specific capabilities and the ease with which the forger can perform a certain task.

Current OCR programs can only be used on black-and white documents. So, the forger would use the OCR program to remove and alter unwanted lettering and other text, and then use the image manipulation program to replace the color in the document before printing it.

It is possible to use Photoshop as an OCR program to alter and remove text elements, but it is much less efficient and harder than using the OCR program to perform the same task. As computer forgers become more skillful through experience, they decide for themselves which program they will use for which particular document.

A simple reference letter can be worked on quickly, entirely in an OCR program. However, the forger might decide, when working on a birth certificate, to perform the text editing and removal in Photoshop, because it will eliminate the step of having to match the color on the document.

This brings us to the printer. If the printer does not produce high-quality output, the documents will not be passable, regardless of how much care is taken with the other elements of the computer forgery set up.

The printers that are commonly supplied with computer system packages are unsuitable for forgery purposes. These color printers are low- to medium-quality printers that will not produce high-quality forgeries. The person buying a computer for the purpose of forgery should ask the salesperson if he can receive a credit on his system purchase if he foregoes the included printer and purchases one of his own choosing.

Computer printers come in three varieties: dot matrix, inkjet, and laser. Dot matrix printers are no longer used except to print multipart forms. Laser printers, especially color ones, tend to be expensive, and are used primarily by businesses. That leaves the color ink-jet printer, which is the most popular one used by individuals in the home.

Resolution is extremely important with the printer. If a person scans a document at 600 by 600 dpi, but their printer has a maximum resolution of 400 by 400 dpi, it is the second figure that the document will be printed at.

Ink-jet printers produce text and images by spraying tiny droplets of ink out of jet nozzles onto the page. The crispness of the document is determined by the fineness, or smallness, of the droplets of ink, and the saturation of ink on the page. The smaller the droplets used to produce the image, the sharper the detail will be. Saturation is a measurement of how much ink the printer uses to produce each droplet. The higher the saturation, the sharper the image. In general, ink-jet printers with higher resolution capabilities have smaller droplets and better saturation than low-resolution ink-jet printers.

A computer forger would purchase an ink-jet printer with 1200 by 600 dpi resolution if possible. My personal recommendation at the time of writing would be the Epson 800 color ink-jet printer. This printer or its successors should be considered.

Another item that needs to be mentioned is how the printer prints at maximum resolution. Some color ink-jet printers only produce their best output on very expensive special papers that can cost over a dollar per page. This is because at high resolution,

ink-jet printing can start to run if printed on regular paper.

The only way to be totally sure about a printer is to print a variety of sample documents and observe the quality of each. Experienced forgers are wary of the sample images that printers produce in computer stores. These images are handpicked to produce the very best output of the printer. So, the photograph of yellow tulips against a black sky may look excellent in the store, but when an attempt is made to print a scanned image at home, the output may be less than satisfactory.

Most stores will accept returns of printers within a reasonable time, if it is for a good reason, the original packaging is in order, and especially if a different printer is then purchased.

We have now covered the basics of the computer forgery system. Before birth certificates can be forged, however, one must understand what is on real ones, and what must be duplicated carefully for a successful doppelganger.

# Chapter Three

## Birth Certificate Basics

### Part One: The Cornerstone of Identity

As any identity seeker, or "paper tripper," knows, a birth certificate is the cornerstone of the new identity. Without one, it is virtually impossible to obtain driver's licenses, state identity cards, passports, and a host of other ID documents. The birth certificate acts as a "breeder," or foundation document that allows an individual to obtain all other forms of identification. The United States birth registration system is unique, and has the imprint of many other nations, especially those of England and Germany. This hodgepodge of influences is one of the reasons that American birth certificates are some of the least secure documents in the world.

Successful forgers understand every important feature of the document that is to be counterfeited. This includes items such as seals, stamps, signatures, numbers, abbreviations, etc. Each one of these items needs to be understood and then duplicated on the forgery.

Some items, such as numbers, may need to be altered from the sample to the forgery that is being created. Numbers are usually part of a system, which means that the forger must understand that system when making his own documents.

This brings us to another consideration that forgers must always remember. They must never, ever, underestimate the intelligence of the people they will be presenting forgeries to. Most clerks in government agencies are more concerned with pigeonholing each member of the public who comes before them than they are in detecting fraudulent documents. However, if these same automatons are presented with a document that screams out "forgery," they will gladly cause the counterfeiter difficulty. Most of the time it will be a simple denial of the service sought from the clerk, but if the document presented really looks bad, the consequences could be worse. Learning how to produce excellent forgeries is not a skill that counterfeiters learn overnight. If they work regularly at learning how to forge documents, say four times a week for an hour at a time, in a few weeks they will be able to turn out excellent productions.

The most common uses of false birth certificates are to obtain employment and to establish a new identity. The government has actually encouraged the growth in false documentation through the Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986. This misguided attempt to reduce the number of illegal immigrants in the United States working in the job market has caused the market in false documentation to grow exponentially.

This law requires all employers to obtain from workers proof of their eligibility to work in the United States. The documents that can be used to establish employment eligibility are the following:

- Passport
- Green Card
- Naturalization Certificate
- Military Identification Card
- Driver's License or State ID Card
- Social Security Card
- Birth Certificate

A person can establish his or her employment eligibility by presenting a driver's license or state identity card and either a birth certificate or Social Security card. Illegal aliens commonly present a state ID card and a Social Security card.

The new requirements led to a booming trade in false documents, some better than others. The trade in phony documentation caused by this law also had an unintended side effect. In Los Angeles, San Francisco, New York, and other cities with large illegal immigrant populations, employers receive so many bogus documents that they are no longer sure what the real ones look like anymore.

An individual who wants to create a new identity needs to manufacture a birth certificate. A solid new identity can be created only if all documentation after the birth certificate is real, government-issued identification. Once a suitable birth certificate has been prepared, the identity seeker will start collecting so-called "soft" forms of identification, and these soft forms of identification are not difficult to obtain.

A voter registration card is one such example. In many states, voter registration cards can be obtained by mail. Other forms of soft identification include library cards, insurance identification cards, and fishing or hunting licenses.

Once the identity-changer has accumulated a wallet full of these documents, a trip to the department of motor vehicles (the DMV), will net him a state identity card with little trouble. A few weeks later, a return trip to the DMV will net a driver's license. A few weeks later, a trip to the Social Security office will yield a new Social Security card. Within a few months, his new identity has become real in the eyes of the government, all because of the pivotal role played by the lowly birth certificate. It is the key to the many rights and privileges of American society.

## **Part Two: Birth Registration**

The responsibility for birth registration belongs to the individual states. In theory, each state sets the guidelines and regulations that determine how all vital record events—births, deaths, marriages, and divorces—will be recorded. The reality is that these events are actually recorded at the county or, in a few cases, the city level, by local county recorders and city registrars. The American tradition of local government ensures that these offices operate with a great deal of independence, regardless of what the state rules are. In most locations, the county and city positions are elected offices, and the recorder may be more concerned with serving his constituency than meeting the guidelines imposed by the state.

Another weakness in the birth registration system lies in how a birth is registered, and the quasi-official birth documents that are created during the process. Birth certificates are issued by three sources in the United States. These are:

1. Hospitals
2. City or county registrar offices
3. State vital statistics bureaus

Most American babies are born in hospitals or birthing centers. The few that are born at home usually have a physician in attendance. When a baby is born, the medical staff in attendance will obtain information to complete a "report of birth" form, or some other similarly named document. This report will contain information of the following sort:

- Full name of child
- Mother's maiden name
- Time and date of birth
- Sex and race of child

- Father's full name
- Age and race of mother
- Age and race of father
- Social Security number of mother
- Social Security number of father
- Place of birth
- Medical data

This document will be printed on an official hospital form, bearing the seal and stamp of the hospital, and will be given to the mother at once. This certificate is issued because it may take many weeks to complete the process of reporting the birth to the city or county registrar, then creating and mailing the birth certificate for the child to the mother. In the interim, the hospital birth certificate is the only official birth document this child has.

The hospital will submit the details of the child's birth to either the city or county registrar within a week of the birth taking place. In most U.S. jurisdictions birth registration is handled at the county level. A few cities still have city registrars that register the births of all infants within the corporation limits of the city.

The creation of the county or city birth certificate involves the registrar entering the details of the birth onto the agency's official birth roll. The entry is the original of the birth certificate from which certified copies are later made. Many counties now also enter the birth details on computer. If a certificate is needed in the future, the computer is consulted instead of the birth roll. All certificates generated from a computer entry will be original extracts.

The state birth certificate is created by the state vital statistics bureau, a central state agency that maintains records of all births, deaths, and marriages. At regular intervals, or shortly after each new birth, all city and county registrars forward either a copy of the county birth record or an extract from their files to the vital statistics repository. In some states this is done via computer. The vital statistics bureau is then able to compile birth and death records on a statewide basis, which are important for health statistics purposes. A copy of the certificate of birth from anywhere in the state is available from the central vital statistics bureau. These certificates are usually different in appearance from those issued at the city or county level. State-issued birth certificates will always be on an official state form and carry different seals than those issued at a local level. We will examine these differences in more detail later.

The critical point is that the primary documents that establish the birth of the child are the hospital birth certificate and the report of birth form. Unless these documents are generated at the time of a child's birth, no city, county, or state certificate will be created.

This fact has led to the widespread counterfeiting of hospital birth records. They are the perfect document to counterfeit because they are not easily verifiable and can have many different versions and styles. The widespread abuse of hospital birth certificates has caused many state and federal agencies to stop accepting them as proof of birth.

For example, the U.S. Passport Office accepts only state or county certificates as proof of birth in the United States. The Passport Office experienced widespread abuse of hospital-issued birth certificates in the 1960s and 1970s by those seeking to obtain citizenship via fraudulent documents. The abuse became so widespread that passport agents now are given special training in how to identify fraudulent birth certificates. For example, here is a checklist of some of the characteristics these agents may be trained to watch for on state-issued birth certificates:

#### *State-issued Birth Certificate Checklist:*

- Certificate should be printed on a standardized state form.
- Certificate should be issued by the state vital statistics bureau.
- Certificate should bear the seal of the state vital statistics bureau and the signature of the vital statistics registrar.
- Birth record should appear to be properly certified.
- Certificate should contain a state birth number that is consistent with numbering rules for that state and, nearly always, a registrar's file number.

### **Part Three: Baptismal Certificates**

One factor that led to the acceptance of baptismal certificates in the U.S. was the spotty birth registration system that existed in some states until relatively recently, and the strength of the organized religions that practice infant baptism.

The lack of a comprehensive birth registration system and the wide scope of the church led in many instances to churches becoming the *de facto* birth registration system in many countries. One example of this practice, which continued until very recently, was in the Canadian province of Quebec.

Until 1995, a person who wanted a birth certificate in Quebec wrote to the local parish for his or her baptismal certificate. This certificate was considered to be the official record of birth. A civil birth registry was set up only recently.

Many state motor vehicle departments will accept baptismal certificates in lieu of birth records, and the Social Security Administration will accept a baptismal certificate if it was filed within five years of the subject's birth. A section of the application form for a Social Security card states that a baptismal certificate is acceptable. Most states that will accept a baptismal certificate will want one issued within two years of an infant's birth.

Baptismal certificates can also be used to obtain a county-issued birth certificate for an infant. In the relatively few cases where a child is born at home, or for some reason does not go to a hospital shortly after birth, a baptismal certificate can be used as proof of the child's birth to obtain a birth certificate.

How, then, can one determine if a baptismal certificate is genuine? Unlike birth certificates, there are very few absolutes. The following can be considered only general guidelines.

The first is the age and appearance of the document itself. As with the hospital birth certificate, baptismal certificates are one-time articles. The child's parents are presented with the certificate after the baptism. This is ordinarily considered a very important document by the parents and will be protected like other important legal papers. So, if an adult presents a baptismal certificate that looks brand new, but was purportedly issued over twenty years ago, it is probably a fraud.

A legitimate baptismal certificate should contain the full name and address of the church and bear the signature and seal of the presiding minister. Many mail-order identification companies sell bogus baptismal certificates. One giveaway on these documents is that they are too generic.

Baptismal certificates from a real church will be customized. The church name and seal will be preprinted on the paper. Mail-order certificates frequently do not identify a particular church, or have a blank space where the church name should go. A baptismal certificate should contain the following:

- Full name of child
- Date of birth of child
- Date of baptism

- Mother's maiden name
- Father's name
- Child's birthplace

Other aspects that need to be considered are more subtle. Does the baptismal certificate come from a known church? Is the religion indicated on the certificate one that practices infant baptism? Many churches do not practice infant baptism, and a baptismal certificate for an infant from one of these churches is sure to be recognized as a phony. Other forms of identification are often asked for to confirm identity if there is any question on the part of the bureaucrat that is examining the document.

In the case of a local, well-organized church, a baptismal register may be kept. The register will list the names of everyone baptized by the church each year. This list can act as a confirmation of the baptismal certificate. The checklist that appears below summarizes the features found on an authentic baptismal certificate, items for which a well-trained government clerk would be looking.

### ***Baptismal Certificate Checklist:***

- The baptismal certificate will be visibly worn.
- The certificate will have the church name and address preprinted on the certificate.
- The certificate will contain the seal of the church and signature of the minister performing the baptism.
- It should always be questioned whether the church named performs infant baptism as a part of its rites.

## **Part Four: Birth and Death Cross-referencing**

Birth and death certificates bookend our existence on the planet. If a child dies at a young age, his birth certificate can be used by an adult seeking to create a new identity. The child will probably not have a driver's license, Social Security card, or other paper baggage created by adults. His identity can then be safely used by another. Even the government uses this method to create new identities for undercover agents, and thugs in the U.S. Marshall's Witness Protection Program.

States have tried to crack down on this use of the identities of the dead by linking birth and death records together. This task is much harder to accomplish in reality than in theory, as we shall shortly see.

We have seen that all vital records originate at the county level. This is as true of death records as it is of birth records. Cross-referencing of birth and death records has always occurred to some degree at the county level. A typical county cross-reference would take place in the following fashion.

A man dies in a hospital. The attending physician completes a "report of death" form. This form is delivered to the county registrar. If this form is filled out correctly, the following information will be listed:

- Full name of the deceased
- Time of expiration
- Place of death
- Cause of death
- Birth date of the deceased
- Birth place of the deceased
- Address of the deceased
- Father's name
- Mother's maiden name



When this form is received at the county registrar's office, a death certificate is created. If the county registrar notices that the deceased was born in the same county, he will pull a copy of the birth certificate and stamp "deceased" on it or, alternatively, staple a copy of the death certificate to the birth record.

The county registrar can be sure that the records cross-referenced belong to the same individual because the registrar is the custodian of both records. The example we have cited is a best-case scenario. Let's consider a more realistic case.

A man from out of state dies in an automobile accident. The physician who certifies the man as being dead will need to complete the death record as soon as possible with the information available. The physician will not always have all of the information called for on the death certificate.

A study of actual death certificates of people who have died in out-of-state calamities will reveal that many of these certificates do not have all of the necessary information. This can happen for many reasons. Perhaps the next of kin could not be located quickly, or the deceased was homeless or destitute.

Consider the implications of a nationwide cross-referencing system. Such a system would require that, when a person died in one state but had been born in another, a copy of the death certificate be sent to the county or state vital statistics bureau in the birth state. The state of birth would then affix a copy of the death record to the birth certificate of this person. Anyone attempting to access this person's birth certificate in the future would receive one marked "deceased."

The first question a system like this would need to answer is which office the death certificate should be sent to. It would make sense to send the certificate to the county registrar's office where the birth occurred. All vital records originate at the county level. Therefore, in theory, record accuracy would be maintained only by having county registrars identify the birth certificate as "Deceased." The county registrar would then forward this information to the state vital statistics office for an identical procedure.

This process would be very expensive. On a daily basis, county personnel would have to match death certificates from all over the nation to their birth records. The process would be rife with error in the many cases where the information is incomplete on the death certificate. Was the John Robert Smith who died in Los Angeles the same John Robert Smith who was born in Buffalo? What happens if we "kill off" people who are still alive?

The bottom line is that a nationwide cross-referencing system is not feasible for a nation like the United States with a decentralized birth registration system. States that have attempted to institute this procedure on a statewide basis have also found it fraught with problems and expense. California, for example, has attempted to cross-reference birth and death records for nearly two decades with only limited success. In an era of tight budgets, the imperative for such an expense is hard to justify.

## **Part Five: Obtaining Certificates**

In order to counterfeit birth certificates successfully, forgers need to develop an inventory of state-, county-, and city-issued certificates. The way they develop this inventory is by writing away for birth certificates from different jurisdictions. To obtain the birth certificate of an individual in most states counterfeiters need to have the following information:

- Full name of child
- Date of birth
- Full name of father
- Maiden name of mother

How do they go about obtaining this information? In the Sunday editions of many newspapers, there are listings of birth announcements. Frequently these announcements will contain enough information to write for the birth record. When writing for the birth record, the counterfeiter writes in either the name of the father or mother of the child. If the counterfeiter wants an older certificate, he simply must consult the old microfiche editions of the newspaper and pick a suitable birth announcement. In this case, the counterfeiter would write to the county registrar as if he were the child himself.

The first birth certificates obtained when a counterfeiter is developing an inventory are those issued by the state vital statistics registry. In Appendix One are the addresses of every state vital statistics office. He writes them asking for a record request form. In actual practice, he does not use this form.

Frequently, the official request forms ask for more information than is available to the counterfeiter. The reason for requesting the form is to learn what the current fee schedule is for ordering a certificate. If the actual request for a certificate is made in the form of a signed letter, which includes the information listed above, with the correct fee enclosed, the request will be honored.

Forgers will frequently have two options when ordering a birth certificate from the central state vital statistics registry. Some states also issue wallet-sized birth cards in addition to the traditional paper certificate. Both documents are ordered if possible, because one might be easier to duplicate than the other.

The counterfeiter's next step is to order these same certificates from the county or city registrar. This may seem redundant, but it is not. The same certificate ordered from the county or city registrar might look very different from the one issued by the state. As a general rule, county- and city-issued documents are easier to forge using old-fashioned techniques than are state-issued documents.

Locally issued certificates may not be on safety paper, and may lack certain other security devices that state documents use. City-issued documents have even greater variation. The following is a partial list of cities which still register births happening within their corporation limits:

- Denver, CO
- Bridgeport, CT
- Hartford, CT
- Boston, MA
- Bangor, ME
- Kansas City, MO
- St. Louis, MO
- New Brunswick, NJ
- ,Nashua, NH
- Dover, NH
- Buffalo, NY
- Huntington, NY
- New York City, NY
- Cincinnati, OH
- Cleveland, OH
- Youngstown, OH
- Erie, PA
- Philadelphia, P A
- Pittsburgh, P A
- Scranton, P A
- Dallas, TX
- Fort Worth, TX

- Houston, TX
- San Antonio, TX
- Spokane, W A
- Milwaukee, WI

## **Part Six: Certification and Notarization**

Birth certificates have numerous numbers, seals, stamps and signatures on them. A good forgery must possess these items in the proper format for the document to be acceptable. The first item we will consider is the certification seal and stamps found on birth certificates.

Every agency that requests birth certificates specifies that it requires a certified copy. There is a great deal of misunderstanding about certified copies, and the users of counterfeit birth records exploit this fact.

An original record is primarily a document that is created by an individual to document an event. The original document can then be used to create certified copies. Birth certificates are usually issued as certified copies. An original certificate is created at the county and state levels. When a request is made for this particular certificate, the original is found, a copy is made on a larger sheet of paper, and this copy is then certified by the clerk. Many states and counties maintain their birth records on microfiche, because creating copies from microfiche is fast, inexpensive, and easy.

Other states (California, for example) issue only original certificates at the state level. The state maintains a computerized list of all births at the central vital statistics bureau. When a request for a certificate is made, it is located on the computer, and an original certificate is created by laser printer. Therefore, all state-issued birth certificates in California are originals. The same cannot be said of county-issued certificates.

What exactly does certification mean? When a document is certified, the certifier is attesting to two important facts: (1) the copy is a true copy of the original, and (2) the information on the document is correct. This is why government departments want certified copies. The only person who can certify a particular document is the person who acts as the custodian of that particular record. The county clerk in San Diego County, for example, can certify a birth certificate from San Diego, but he cannot certify a copy from Los Angeles County.

A notarized document is an entirely different matter. Notaries public function essentially as public witnesses. When a notary public notarizes a document, the only aspect of the document that he is validating is the signature that is added to the document in his presence. The notary seal does not vouch for the accuracy of the information on the document, or even that the document is authentic. Notaries public are taught to use due care and diligence when notarizing documents they are unfamiliar with, but they have no way of knowing if a document is real or not.

The widespread confusion over the difference between certification and notarization allows many fraudulent birth certificates to be used successfully. Most Federal agencies will not accept notarized documents. The Social Security application material explicitly states that the only materials the department will accept are copies certified by the keeper of the original record. As noted earlier, the U.S. Passport Office has a similar policy.

Notarized documents will successfully pass by most motor vehicle department clerks, voter registration officials, and other state and local bureaucrats. The lesson here is that any notarized document needs to be regarded with suspicion. Examine the seal and "Jurat" (statement under the seal) carefully. All notarized documents will have the notary public's name, commission number and seal.

A state-issued birth certificate will contain the certification seal of either the state or the state department of vital statistics. This seal will be embossed onto the paper with an embossing tool. This is why embossing tools with state seals on them must be obtained if birth certificates are going to be forged. All document bureaucrats will check for this seal to determine the authenticity of the document.

Fortunately for counterfeiters, most states have no laws restricting the reproduction of their state seals, and there is a way around this problem if a state seal is needed whose reproduction is prohibited. If the seal of the vital statistics agency of state "X" is needed, but in state "X" it is illegal to privately reproduce this seal, the forger is not out of luck. He simply goes to an office supply shop in another state where there is no such law, and has the seal reproduced there.

Another ruse employed by counterfeiters is to have letterhead and business cards printed up that make them a representative of a movie company. They simply tell the clerk at the office supply store or legal supply company that the embosser is needed for an upcoming movie. This will almost always work. An embossing tool can be purchased for under \$50. When the certificate is embossed, the raised seal will be evident, and if everything else looks good, the certificate will be accepted.

County-issued birth certificates will have the seal of the county health department or just the seal of the county if the county registrar (as opposed to the county health department) issues the certificates. City-issued certificates will bear the city seal and are usually issued by the city health department.

In addition to the embossed seal, all authentic certificates will carry a signature, frequently preprinted, of the official in charge of issuing the certificates. The date the certificate was issued will also be stamped somewhere on the document.

As the counterfeiter develops a collection of certificates, he will notice that there is a certain general similarity in most birth certificates issued in the United States. This is not by accident. Over the last seventy years, a committee of public health experts has held meetings every decade. One of the items that these professionals discuss is the format and information that should be reported on U.S. birth certificates. This discussion has led to the creation of what is known as the U.S. Standard Certificate of Birth.

On page 20 is a reprint of a generic U.S. Standard Birth Certificate body. This body is customized for use by most states. Some states do not use this layout and certificates from city and county registrars can and will vary greatly from this. But 70% of U.S. certificates bear a strong resemblance to this document.

Because of this, the federal government has actually made it easier for the birth certificate counterfeiter to do his work. By attempting to get the states to accept the U.S. Standard Certificate format, any birth certificate having this layout avoids most suspicion.

This committee mentioned above also decided on the numbering system that is used on all state-issued birth certificates, and on some county- and city-issued birth certificates. This numbering system is important for counterfeiters to understand because improper use of these numbers will tell a document clerk that the certificate before him is likely a fraud.

These numbers can tell the clerk if the birth date and state of issue on the certificate matches the coding of the numerical sequence. The U.S. Passport Office is particularly adept at decoding the numbers found on state-issued birth certificates.

Most state-issued birth certificates carry a state file number that consists of three numbers followed by a dash, two more numbers, a dash, and then a block of six or seven numbers. This numbering sequence indicates the **state, year, and sequence of birth**.

The first number of the first three digits is always a "1." This "1" indicates birth in the United States. The two digits following the "1" indicate in which state the person was born. These numbers follow a rough alphabetical order. Illinois birth certificates have "12"

following the initial "1," while Washington state birth certificates have a "46" after the "1."

What should be clear is that all American birth certificates will have the number "1" as the lead digit. A forger who offers a state-issued birth certificate with a different lead digit will be detected quickly.

What should also be clear is that the first three digits on all state-issued birth certificates from the same state will be identical. This is why the first three numbers are often preprinted on state-issued birth certificates. For example, the first three digits on all Illinois state birth certificates are always 112, while the first three digits on all Washington state birth certificates are always 146.

The next two digits indicate the year of birth. Thus, a "60" in this spot would indicate birth in 1960. A "45" would indicate birth in 1945, and so on. Beginning with the year 2000, many states are now printing the entire year of birth. So, 2001 will appear here instead of just 01.

The last six or seven digits are the birth registration number. This is the sequential number that the birth was registered in by the state vital statistics bureau. The very first birth that a given state registers for a given year will have the number 000001, the second birth 000002, and so on.

STATE OF		CERTIFICATE OF LIVE BIRTH		BIRTH NO.	
1. PLACE OF BIRTH		2. USUAL RESIDENCE OF MOTHER (Where does mother live?)			
a. COUNTY		a. STATE		b. COUNTY	
b. CITY, TOWN OR LOCATION		c. CITY, TOWN OR LOCATION			
c. NAME OF (If not in hospital, give street address) HOSPITAL OR INSTITUTION		d. STREET ADDRESS			
d. IS PLACE OF BIRTH INSIDE CITY LIMITS? YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/>		e. IS RESIDENCE INSIDE CITY LIMITS YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/>		f. IS RESIDENCE A FARM? YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/>	
3. NAME (Type or print)					
First		Middle		Last	
4. SEX	5. THIS BIRTH SINGLE <input type="checkbox"/> TWIN <input type="checkbox"/> TRIPLET <input type="checkbox"/>	5a. IF TWIN OR TRIPLET, WAS CHILD BORN 1ST <input type="checkbox"/> 2D <input type="checkbox"/> 3D <input type="checkbox"/>		DATE OF BIRTH Month Day Year	
7. NAME		First		Middle	
8. AGE (At time of this birth) Years		10. BIRTHPLACE (State or foreign country)		11a. USUAL OCCUPATION	
12. MAIDEN NAME		First		Middle	
14. AGE (At time of this birth)		15. BIRTHPLACE (State or foreign country)		16. PREVIOUS DELIVERIES TO MOTHER (DO NOT include this birth)	
17. INFORMANT		a. How many OTHER children are now living?		b. How many OTHER children were born since But are now dead?	
18. MOTHER'S MAILING ADDRESS		18a. SIGNATURE		18b. ATTENDANT AT BIRTH M.D. <input type="checkbox"/> D.O. <input type="checkbox"/> MIDWIFE <input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (Specify)	
18c. ADDRESS		18d. DATE SIGNED		19. DATE REC'D BY LOCAL REG.	
20. REGISTRAR'S SIGNATURE		21. DATE ON WHICH GIVEN NAME ADDED BY (Registrar)		22. LENGTH OF PREGNANCY COMPLETED WEEKS	
23. WEIGHT AT BIRTH LB. OZ.		24. LEGITIMATE YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/>		25. DATE OF BIRTH	
(SPACE FOR ADDITION OF MEDICAL AND HEALTH ITEMS BY INDIVIDUAL STATES)					

City- and county-issued certificates will frequently not have all these numbers, for a number of reasons. In some cases, the locally issued documents do not carry a state birth number simply because the state birth number has not been assigned yet. Remember, the

county registrar's records are the basis for the master file of births at the vital statistics bureau, not the other way around.

County-issued certificates will carry a registrar's file number, which can be anywhere from two to six digits long. In some states, a state birth number *is* assigned immediately to county certificates because the county registrar is linked via computer to the vital statistics bureau. A state file number is created when the county registrar creates the record. Some county registrars obtain state file numbers when certificates are issued years later from computer files sent to them by the state. This is faster than looking up and photocopying certificates from musty volumes.

Now that we have seen how the state file numbers are created, let's look at a few. The first number we will look at comes from the state of Missouri:

**124-67-076225**

We can now break this number down into its constituent parts:

1 - Indicates birth in the United States

24 - Missouri state number

67 - Year of birth

076225 - Sequential birth number

So, this person was born in 1967 in Missouri, and was the 76,225th baby registered that year. Let's look at another state birth number:

**132-72-000811**

Once again we break it down:

1 - Indicates birth in the United States

32 - North Carolina state number

72 - Year of birth

000811 - Sequential birth number

This individual was born in 1972 in North Carolina, and was the 811th baby registered.

Counterfeit state-issued birth certificates often contain impossible state birth numbers. Appendix Two contains the two-digit state numbers for every state.

We have seen how the birth registration process works, and the flaws inherent in that system. Successful birth certificate counterfeiters exploit these flaws to their fullest, while honing their skills through practice.

The United States is awash with phony birth certificates. Most of the five million illegal immigrants possess such bogus paper. In many cities, an open street trade exists in these and other identification documents. The simple fact is that it does not require much money or expensive equipment to create birth certificates that look as good, if not better, than the real item. This is especially true in the age of home computers, word processors, and desktop publishing programs.

We will examine how false birth certificates are produced and some of the small errors that can give them away. One thing is very clear, however. Anyone willing to invest a little time and effort can produce birth certificates that appear in all respects to be the genuine item, and there is no easy solution to this problem

## Chapter Four

# Old-Fashioned Birth Certificate Forgery

### Part One: Photocopying an Original

Forgery of birth certificates the old-fashioned way begins with the proper care of the counterfeiters' sample certificates. From the time they receive their sample certificates in the mail, they take diligent care of them. An original whose quality has been compromised by food stains or other careless handling will produce a lesser-quality forgery.

The sample certificates likely will have arrived in a business-sized envelope that has made it necessary for the certificate to be folded at least twice. The forger needs to remove these fold lines, or reduce them as much as possible.

Clear plastic sleeves need to be purchased in which to store the certificates, lying flat, until the time comes to use them. When the certificates first arrive, the counterfeiter washes his hands completely. Each certificate is removed from the envelope and folded out, then placed in a plastic sleeve. Each of these sleeves is then placed under a heavy object, such as a book, with the birth certificate face down. The weight of the book on the back of the certificate causes the certificate to lose its tendency to fold itself back up.

The next step is to pick which certificate the counterfeiter is interested in forging. Some certificates have so much elaboration on them, such as multicolored background and security features, that the paste-up method of forgery is required. This is described later in this chapter. If he has a relatively simple document, he can proceed to the next step, which is the photocopier.

He needs to create a work copy, which is the first generation photocopy that he makes alterations on. It is crucial that this copy be as clear as possible. Before using the copy machine, he must clean the glass and the underside of the cover with glass cleaner. Most self-service copy shops have cleaner and paper towels nearby. This step must not be skipped, as it makes a noticeable difference in copy quality output. The average self-service copy shop machine is used hundreds of times a day by numerous people copying all sorts of documents, some of them dirty.

The certificate is removed from the sleeve and placed face down on the copier, and the cover is closed. The contrast control must be experimented with to determine what settings produce the best copy. Too strong a setting on the contrast, control, and every line and grain on the paper is brought out. Too weak a setting, and valuable resolution of the lettering is lost. Once the desired setting is found, at least ten copies are made at this setting. On each copy, the contrast control setting is noted with a non-reproducing blue pen.

Next, one of these certificates is examined closely, noting the size of the data boxes that contain information. The counterfeiter knows that he will have to use correction fluid on these items. He notes whether there is enough room to comfortably do so without also inadvertently removing part of a line. If not, an old printer's and commercial artist's trick may need to be employed.

The counterfeiter can use the enlargement feature on the copier when making the work copy. If the work copy is enlarged by 10 or 20 percent, there is much more area to work with. The first generation work copy should not be enlarged. Rather, the enlargement is made directly from the certificate original.

The certificate is put back on the machine, and the contrast setting is reset to where it was before. Next, the enlargement control is set to enlarge by 10 percent. Ten percent

enlargement is usually enough to provide ample work space. Finally, ten or more copies are made at this size. These are now the work copies.

The work copies should be placed in a plastic sleeve. The counterfeiter needs to remember that when copying these versions for the final certificate, he will need to use the reduction mode on the copier by the same amount in order to return the certificate to its original size.

Correction fluid, commonly known as Whiteout, is used to remove the information from the data boxes. One mistake amateur forgers make is using too much fluid. A little correction fluid goes a long way. Just enough to obscure the writing should be used, and no more. Too much fluid saturates the paper, and causes the dried fluid to bump up, which will show when the work copy is copied.

Only fresh correction fluid that has been well shaken should be used. Successful counterfeiters have found that little matters like this make all the difference in producing a good forgery.

The first item that needs to be removed is the last six or eight numbers. The first three numbers should be left unaltered. In the previous chapter we discovered that these numbers are the same for all state-issued certificates from the same state. Unless the forger wants his new birth year to be the same as the year of the original certificate, the middle two numbers also need to be removed.

The signatures of the doctor attending the birth and the registrar should be allowed to remain, because signing a document later on with the signatures of two different people is difficult.

Next, all embossed seals are covered. Later, an embossed seal will be added with an embossing tool acquired for this purpose. If an issue date has been stamped on the certificate, it is removed as well. What is left is a work copy that is ready to be turned into a final certificate.

This certificate is then copied onto parchment or card stock, trying to duplicate the paper the original certificate came on. A forger might try copying this certificate onto any number of different paper styles, experimenting with different contrast settings until the optimum result is obtained and remembering to use the reduction mode.

The result is what will become the new birth certificate, but there is still work to be done. The certificate must be filled out and the necessary embossed seal added. Then the document must be suitably aged.

Close attention must be paid to detail when completing the document. On a separate sheet of paper, the counterfeiter writes out all of the pertinent information that is to go on the certificate. He must remember that many conventions of description that are used now were not used twenty-five, thirty, or forty years ago.

One such item is racial descriptions. Until the 1980s, the term on birth certificates for black Americans was "Negro." A birth certificate purporting to be from 1968 for a black female that has "Black" or "African American" listed in the racial category yells out to an experienced clerk that it is a forgery. The same is true of the term "Hispanic" to describe Americans of Latin American descent. This term did not come into common use on birth certificates until the 1980s.

The use of Zip codes and two-digit state abbreviations must also be avoided, unless the document you are creating purports to be from a year in which they were used. The Zip code was introduced in 1963, but was not commonly used by people until two or three years later. The two-letter state abbreviations did not come into common usage until the late 1970s. The Post Office introduced them in the mid-1970s, but it took a while for people to start using them.

Similar care must be used when choosing the method with which the document is actually completed. Most birth certificates were completed with electric typewriters until the



late 1980s. Therefore, a computer type-style on a document that bills itself as a certified copy of a record issued in 1970 screams "fraud."

The birth certificate forger can frequently rent an IBM Selectric or similar typewriter at many quick-copy shops, or even purchase an electric typewriter himself for less than \$200.

## **Part Two: Cut and Paste**

The paste-up method of forgery is used when the original document will not allow itself to be easily photocopied and a usable work copy made. This can happen for a number of reasons. The original document might be printed on paper that will not photocopy. The original document might be damaged or soiled, etc. Regardless of the reason, the paste-up method can come to the rescue.

With the paste-up method, an attempt is made to recreate a document through the process of cutting and pasting various document elements on a sheet of paper. Once all of the required elements are in place, this document is then photocopied to make a new original document. The cutting and pasting method requires much more work than the photocopy method.

The advantage of the cutting and pasting method is that extremely high-quality forgeries can be made. The body of most birth certificates is the U.S. Standard Certificate reproduced earlier in this book. A forger could start with this certificate as the body of his cutting and pasting document. A heading would need to be added to this certificate, possibly the heading cut off from the original document. Many copies may be made of the original document, and the initial cut and paste job done with sections from these copies.

This is where the ruler, triangles and light table come into play, because it is necessary that the items that are cut and pasted onto the sheet of paper be properly aligned. A series of straight lines could be blocked out across the white card stock that the various items would be cut and pasted onto. These horizontal and vertical lines should be done in non-reproducing blue pen.

The paste-up is done with glue stick, and just as in the case of correction fluid, less is more. Used sparingly, the glue stick gives excellent results. It also allows small movements to be made in the applied item to allow it to be lined up correctly.

If for some reason the heading from the original document cannot be used, it will need to be recreated. This is done with rub-on transfer lettering. With transfer lettering, the letter is placed over the spot where it is needed, and rubbed. The letter goes from the plastic transfer sheet onto the paper. Document forgers find that it takes some time to learn how to do a consistently good job using transfer lettering, but that it is a skill well worth developing. Once proficiency is developed using transfer lettering, almost any certificate heading can be duplicated easily.

The key to good paste-up forgery is practice, practice, practice. Good document forgers do not rush this process. Some mistakes are made, but these are part of the learning process. They practice transferring any number of different types of headings, and paste-up headings from different types of documents.

Another method of creating headings or lettering is the use of an electric typewriter mentioned earlier. The electric typewriter is particularly useful to recreate a line of text, such as "Given under my hand on November 10th, 1989." This statement could be typed in bold type on the electric typewriter, and then the wording cut off the page and pasted onto the card stock.

Once the paste-up process is finished, the card stock sheet with the pasted-on items is placed into a plastic sleeve. The document forger's next step is to photocopy the paste-up document onto parchment paper for the final certificate.

Just as before, the copy machine glass is cleaned, and various contrast settings are experimented with. This experimentation is done while copying onto plain white paper. Once the ideal settings are decided on, copies are made onto parchment stock. One copying trick used is to copy onto a darker shade of parchment paper, thus reducing the appearance of lines on the paste-up documents. The darker paper obscures the lines or, in many cases, the copier will simply not detect them.

After a number of certificates are produced, an experienced document forger will put them away for at least one day. Unlike the novice document forger, he realizes that there is a natural exuberance after having finished a document. The novice forger is ready to go out and start using the document right away. This is almost always a mistake. It is very likely that some errors have been made on the certificate that a document clerk will notice; especially if it is the first certificate that the forger has ever produced. The only way for these mistakes to be detected is for the forger to make a critical appraisal of his efforts. A twenty-four hour period gives time to come down off the high of producing that first document.

When the document is examined, it is compared side by side with the real item, while obvious and not-so-obvious mistakes are looked for. Were spelling mistakes made? Are the dates on the birth certificate plausible? Do the certificate numbers correctly follow the format? Was an important item such as a seal or a signature overlooked? Does the overall look of the document seem authentic, or does something about it scream forgery? This step is skipped only at the document forger's peril. Many a counterfeit birth certificate has been detected because the forger did not take the time to dispassionately evaluate his work.

After the certificate is manufactured and filled out, it will need to be aged. Aging a document is very important. Nothing screams "forgery" more loudly than a new certificate in pristine condition. A certificate that is at least two years old and that shows some wear is the ideal document to use.

The first part of aging a document is the date of issue stamped on the birth certificate. Document counterfeiters make a habit of trying to collect old day and date stampers from friends and business colleagues. This will give them the ability to backdate documents many years in some cases. A visit to an office supply store gives them a wide selection of day and date stampers to choose from. Some of these give the user a five-year span over which they can be used. Forgers pick stampers that go back as far as possible, along with an inkpad.

Aging paper documents is not that difficult to do. An older document has two signs of aging. The first is the fold lines that most paper documents accumulate. Birth certificates are usually kept in an envelope, not laid out nice and flat. Fold lines can be put into a paper certificate by folding and refolding the document repeatedly along the same lines.

Next, the paper will need to be aged, which is really not a very difficult process. One method involves letting Mother Nature do all the work. If a window that gets good exposure to the sun is available, the certificate can be taped to this window and exposed to the sun for about a week. The radiation from the sun will darken the paper some and give it that old, weather-beaten look.

The second method is much quicker, and involves making a double- or triple-strength hot tea solution. The tea solution is poured into a pan large enough to hold a normal-sized sheet of paper lying flat. After the solution has been poured into the pan, the certificate is placed in the tea. It is sometimes necessary to weigh down the certificate so

that it stays submerged. Over time the pigmentation from the tea will find its way into the fibers of the paper. An hour is usually sufficient.

After this period is passed the solution is poured off, and the certificate carefully removed. The certificate can tear easily at this point, so caution must be used. Now the certificate needs to be dried out. The quickest way to do this is to place the certificate over a heating duct or air conditioner outlet. Another possibility is to hang the certificate and run a fan across it. The certificate must be totally dry before handling.

This completes our study of old-fashioned birth certificate forgery. Many birth certificate forgers prefer the computer and in the next chapter we will see why.

# Chapter Five

## Computer Forgery of Birth Certificates

### Part One: Color Scanning

We have already discussed the basic components of the computer set-up needed to forge birth certificates and other documents. The primary advantage of learning how to forge documents on a computer is that the document forger can practice and practice until he produces error-free documents. On a computer, he need not print anything until it is in perfect condition. This saves the time and expense of the old-fashioned forgery method, where most of the initial documents will have some mistakes. The other big advantage is that all documents are originals.

The first method involves scanning a certificate into the computer in color, and going directly to the image manipulation program (e.g., Photoshop) to make the necessary changes. The first step is for the document counterfeiter to pick one of the certificates from his collection and place it in the scanner. The certificate needs to be scanned in at either the highest resolution at which his printer can print, or the highest optical resolution of his scanner, whichever is higher.

This is a crucial point to understand. If his printer has a maximum print resolution of 720 by 720 dpi, an image scanned at 1200 by 1200 dpi will still be printed at the printer's resolution. This is why the resolution of the printer is just as important as that of the scanner. Conversely, if his scanner's maximum resolution is 400 by 400 dpi, it will make little difference if he attempts to print this image at 720 by 720 dpi. The printer cannot create pieces of image that are not present in the scanned document. The printer will produce an image of 400 by 400 dpi, which is what the scanner scanned the image at.

When scanning the certificate in color, the forger must scan at the maximum optical resolution of the scanner or the maximum printer resolution, whichever is less. This will ensure that he obtains the maximum image resolution on the finished product. This high resolution scanning takes some time. When the scan is finished, he will be able to view the image and check to see that all of the paper was captured by the scanner.

It pays for the counterfeiter to be very careful on how he places the paper in the scanner at this point, because if the paper is not aligned correctly, he might accidentally clip off part of the image. Another more common consequence of bad alignment is that the certificate will be at an angle when he views it. Before he can print out the image, he will have to use the image rotation feature to correctly place it. This adds extra work, but if he does not use the image rotation feature, the certificate will print out at an angle on the printer paper.

After he has an acceptable scan, the counterfeiter then calls up the image manipulation program. He imports the scanned certificate into this program for alteration. This is where another advantage of computer forgery becomes very apparent. As long as he has the original, unaltered image saved into the computer's memory, it does not matter if he makes any mistakes in the alteration process. If he screws up on alterations, he simply goes back into memory and recalls the original, unaltered scan, and begins his work again.

There is no wasted paper or thrown-out photocopy. Scanning in color has the advantage of being able to print the final product directly from the screen. He does not have to take the additional step of replacing the color. The disadvantage of scanning in color directly into a program like Photoshop is that the Photoshop program is not the easiest program to

use to remove lettering. The Photoshop program will want to replace the background with a white space when removing a letter. This is not a fatal problem, because of another feature of the image manipulation program, a feature that will also help the counterfeiter defeat a common security feature that is on many birth certificates.

Some states, in order to deter counterfeiting, have placed ink lettering on their certificates that say "void" in bright red or blue lettering. These letters only become visible if the certificate is exposed to the energy of a copier or a scanner. This does not render the document unusable, however. One feature of Photoshop is the ability to zero in on a particular area and blow it up over and over again. Once the forger has done this, he can then use the eraser icon to remove the offending lettering. When he does, this white space will be left behind.

Photoshop has an answer for this, which is what also occurs when letters or numbers are removed. He uses the paintbrush icon and palette to replace the removed background color. He will be able to match the original color and shading very closely. This process takes a little while, but it is not that difficult. He can go through and systematically remove the information that he does not want.

Once the data are removed from the certificate, two choices are available. In the first method, the blank certificate can be printed up and a typewriter or word processor used to complete the certificate. The advantage of this is that the typewriter will actually disturb the fibers of the paper. This may be desirable. The disadvantage of this method is that if the counterfeiter screws up, he will have to discard the certificate and print up another one to complete.

The second method involves using the Photoshop program to add the information to the certificate, and then printing the document. One advantage of this method is that the counterfeiter can do everything in one shot, and if he makes a mistake adding information, he can simply remove it and try again. The other advantage is that when he prints the certificate, all of the writing on the certificate body will look the same, as it might if the certificate is a certified photocopy of a document on file. The forger is also able to keep the signatures on the original certificate. The disadvantage is that Photoshop is not the easiest program to use to add lettering onto a document. With practice, however, the counterfeiter can become skilled at doing this.

## **Part Two: Black-and-White**

The second method of birth certificate forgery involves scanning the document into the computer in black and white. Once again, the document counterfeiter will scan at either the maximum scanner resolution or maximum printer resolution, whichever is least. In this method, the document is imported into the OCR program. Current OCR programs do not work on color documents, hence the need for a black and white scan.

The OCR program converts the scanned birth certificate from a graphic file into a text file. This allows the document forger to remove lettering, numbers and other items very easily, and allows him to replace those items more easily than with the Photoshop program. Finally, it allows the storage of the certificate as just another file and the importing of that file into a word-processing program. The procedure for removing and altering text is the same with this method, just easier to do.

Once the alterations are completed, the document needs to be run through Photoshop to replace the color. As mentioned, the Photoshop program comes with a paintbrush tool and palette. To replace the color in a given section of the certificate, the document forger first matches the color with the palette, and then uses the paintbrush to apply the color. A section can be boxed to apply the color all at once, or the "paint can" icon

can be used to add different colors to just letters or numbers. Once the color is replaced, the finished document is printed.

If the certificate itself is in black and white, this method is quicker and easier than going into Photoshop. A black and white certificate can be made entirely in the OCR program. Photoshop allows a computer version of cutting and pasting. The advantage of cutting and pasting via computer is that there are no transition lines or smudges from correction fluid for the counterfeiter to worry about. Excellent looking original documents can be created that do not even exist in reality, or the quality of a poor original can be improved.

A few states, such as Missouri, keep their birth certificate files on microfiche. When a request for a certificate is made, the microfiche spool containing the original is found and photocopied. Microfiche copies very badly, with lots of dropping out and poor image quality. Some government agencies will balk at accepting these certificates because of the poor quality. This is a situation where computer cutting and pasting can work wonders.

First, a U.S. Standard Birth Certificate body similar to the one given earlier in the book is scanned in. Then, the heading of the certificate is duplicated using a font from a word-processing program. This is then scanned into the computer. Photoshop is then used to mate the two together, and presto, you have a Missouri birth certificate that looks better than the one from the state.

An alternative method is to scan the U.S. certificate body, but then to put it into the OCR program instead of Photoshop. If this is done, the heading can be added directly onto the certificate via a word-processing program, because the certificate body is now recognized as text and not a graphic. Document forgers make a habit of scanning any official artwork or other logos into their computers, because it may become helpful at a later date.

Here's one last word on printers, before we conclude this chapter. It was mentioned before that high-quality ink-jet printers are often a good choice for birth certificate counterfeiters, because these printers are the most affordable.

A color laser printer, however, will print higher-quality documents than the equivalent ink-jet printer. There is also less problem of the image run that can occur with ink-jet printers. The laser burns the image into the paper, so it is more steadfast. If a color laser printer is purchased, most forgers find that one with a maximum resolution 600 by 600 dpi is sufficient to produce most documents, because the increased sharpness of the laser printer allows them to accept a lower dpi rating. Another laser printer advantage is that it will print most documents faster than an ink-jet printer.

We have now covered the various forgery methods available to document counterfeiters attempting to create passable, high-quality birth certificates. In the next chapters, we will look at what is involved in the forgery of other paper identification documents, such as Social Security cards, driver's licenses, reference letters and educational transcripts.

## Chapter Six

# Driver's License and Identification Card Forgery

The computer makes it possible to forge driver's licenses and other plastic identification cards. A forged driver's license has its limitations. As long as the forger understands what the limitations of the document are, a forged driver's license or state identification card can have its use early in the identity-building process.

Driver's licenses and state identification cards are of two types. There is the plastic laminated card that is the standard license issued in most states. The second type of card is the credit-card-stock-type license, which is now becoming the standard for issuance in some states. Both types of licenses can be forged using computer methods. We will consider the plastic laminated license first.

If you look at a plastic laminated license, a number of features become apparent upon close examination. The first is that it is a one-piece document. The photograph is an integral part of the license. This is the reason that most mail-order fake identification is useless. Most of these items are two-piece documents, with the photograph glued onto the card, and then the laminate applied.

You will also notice that part of a state seal or signature overlaps the photograph. This is an anti-counterfeiting device. If an underage person attempts to paste a new photo onto someone else's license and re-laminate it, this will trip them up. The new photograph will not have the seal or signature overlapping the photograph.

Another security device that is commonly used is imprinting the state seal into the laminate itself. Look closely at the license card itself. If you were to remove the lamination, you might be surprised to notice that the actual license card is not paper with printing on it. Most states use the Polaroid process system to issue licenses. The license card is actually a photograph containing the photo of the holder and the personal information.

The first step in a forger's duplicating the plastic laminate license is to obtain a clear license template for the state he wants. This is not that difficult to do. Some state license templates are posted and available for anyone to copy at a number of sites on the Internet. To locate these sites, the document forger uses a search engine and enters "false driver's licenses" or similar wording. After a little searching, he will come across these sites. These addresses will change, but this is the best way to locate them.

Another alternative is to purchase the fake driver's license kit from Underground Software. This kit will include blank license templates from every state and a few foreign countries. Their address is: Underground Software, PO Box 98, Sudbury, MA 01776 Phone: (781) 440-9217

When a forger purchases the fake driver's license kit from them, they include the holograms from two states for free, and a way to order holograms from all fifty states to put on the plastic. Once the document forger has a high-quality template to work from, he needs to insert the license material with Photoshop. He will want to match the font of a real license from that state. He will also need to know the license numbering system from the state he is duplicating.

One trick that a forger can use to make a license that will actually verify if subjected to a computer check is to make a counterfeit license with the name and license number of a real individual. In today's data-drenched society, this is not hard to do.

A number of companies sell CD-ROM disks that contain the names, birth dates,

addresses, and license numbers of millions of individuals. A few states, such as Oregon, will sell their entire license database to anyone who wants to purchase the CD-ROM. This file gives the counterfeiter all the information he needs to create a duplicate license of an individual who bears a general resemblance to himself.

Another way for document counterfeiters to obtain real license numbers is to use a variation of an employment advertising trick often used to obtain confidential information. The forger would place an advertisement in a newspaper in a faraway major city in the state from which he wishes to create a forged license. The return address would be a mail-drop in that city. The forger would offer a higher-than-normal salary, and request that applicants submit a full resume and copies of their driver's license.

Within a few weeks, he would have hundreds of license copies and detailed personal histories from the resumes. He could then select a license number and name to duplicate. With this scheme it would even be possible to exchange his forged license for a real one in another state.

Some states do not return the old license to the state of issuance when a new resident applies for a license exchange. They will sometimes punch a hole through the old license, or simply destroy it. There is no need to return licenses as in the past because the motor vehicle clerk can verify on computer if the license presented for exchange is valid. It also saves hundreds of thousands of dollars per year on postage costs. One state that does this is Washington State. Let's follow the transaction through to see how it would work.

An ad is run in a newspaper in Pennsylvania asking for applicants to submit a resume and a copy of their driver's license. A few weeks later, the forger identifies an applicant whose general identifiers are similar to his own. General identifiers are height, weight, sex, hair color, eye color and age.

He would then create a forged driver's license from Pennsylvania, with the same license number, address and expiration date as the one for which he has a photocopy. He would then go to a Washington state licensing bureau location and apply for a Washington state license. He would have to take the written test, but the road test would be waived. When he is at the clerk's window, the clerk would verify through computer link with the Pennsylvania motor vehicles department that the applicant's out-of-state license is valid. Once this is done, the clerk would punch a hole in the Pennsylvania license and hand it to the forger.

After passing the written test, the forger would be given a Washington state license of the same class as the forged out-of-state license. This is an example of how forged identification can be used to obtain real identification.

It is still possible to obtain a piece of real identification in a state that returns licenses to the original state. The forger would have to settle for a state identification card. But this card could be taken to a third state and used as identification to obtain a license there. The rules for exchanging out-of-state licenses are available from every state's motor vehicle department. And they all have informative, detailed websites on the Internet.

Let's go back to the license forgery. Once the forger has added the personal information, he will need to place his photograph on the document. This is done by having his photo taken at a booth or quick copy shop. He needs to make sure to match the background of the photo on the real license.

The photo will be scanned at high resolution in color and imported into Photoshop. The license counterfeiter would then use Photoshop to resize the photo so that it fits over the correct spot on the license. After the photo has been added, he can then add the overlapping signature, numbers, or letters that appear on the photo. He can even add his own signature this way by signing his name on a line, and then importing it into the document. Of course, the document could be printed first, and then signed.

Each side of the document is done separately and then mated carefully together



before laminating them. A paper knife is necessary to cut the document accurately. A small paper knife can be purchased for around \$25. The successful forger will not scrimp on purchasing or using a paper cutter. One telltale sign of a forgery is a document whose edges are not cut correctly.

After he has cut out both sides of the license with the paper cutter, he needs to match them together accurately. He places the back of the license on the upper left hand corner of a sheet of paper. After he has aligned the right and top sides with the paper, he uses a piece of removable tape to hold it in place. Now the forger practices placing the front of the document over the back, aligning it carefully with the back. Once he is confident of his placement, he uses a little bit of glue stick on the center of the back. He places the front of the card down over this and removes the tape. The glue stick will hold everything in place until the license is laminated. Then the hologram, if any, is added to the front of the license.

Next, the document is laminated in the laminating machine. If it is a license that has the state seal on the laminate, the forger will use one of these; otherwise, a standard lamination sleeve will do just fine. A minute later, he will have a forgery that will defy detection.

Forging the new credit card-style licenses is a little harder for the counterfeiter, but not by much. The first problem he faces is obtaining a piece of credit card-style plastic to produce the license on. He has three options. He can purchase what is known as "white plastic" with magnetic strips on the back from identification system suppliers.

A second option is for the forger to use an old automated teller machine card or credit card. The advantage of this method is that the plastic card will have a magnetic strip on it. The last option is to use a plastic library card.

If either of the last two options is selected, the card must be cleaned up so that it becomes what is known in forgery jargon as the aforementioned "white plastic." If a credit card is examined carefully, it will be noticed that the color printing only appears on the front and rear surfaces of the card. The interior of the card is white. To make an existing card white again requires soaking it in a bleach solution until all of the writing comes off. If a card with a magnetic strip on it is used, the strip needs to be covered with a piece of waterproof tape cut to match the length and width of the strip. A library card can be dunked in a solution of bleach. It takes a few hours for all of the printing to come off.

Next, the Photoshop program is used to create the rest of the license. An actual license or template is scanned, and the alterations or additions that are needed are made. The fact that the license surface has a color image or background causes no problem in the finished item.

The photograph is added the same way it was done with the laminated card license. The big difference is in how the license document is printed. Instead of printing the license document on paper, the forger prints it on a transparency sheet available from an office supply outlet. This captures the color background that is actually printed on the plastic card on the real license.

The next step is placing the printed transparency onto the license plastic without leaving traces. Transparent super glue works just fine for this. The forger needs to remember that a little super glue goes a long way. He just makes sure that the license edges are glued down securely. A few drops in the center of the license are usually enough because the glue will spread when the transparency is laid flat against the plastic license card. He will probably have to practice this a few times to get it just right.

The same procedure is followed when doing the back of the card, which is normally much easier. If the state whose license the forger picks has a magnetic strip, he must make

sure that he "fries" the strip after the license is finished. A magnet passed over the strip a few times usually suffices to scramble the encoded data. This is important, and not just in the case of a duplicate of a real card made to drive with. If a credit card is used to make this license, for example, the magnetic strip will contain credit card information, not driver's license data. Many merchants now have the ability to read these strips. It would raise many questions if a license strip had credit card information on it.

The address of a supplier of state holograms and holographic seals is:  
Holographic Enterprises, P.O. Box 1172, Molalla, OR 997038

## **Chapter Seven**

# **Social Security Cards**

### **Part One: The History of the Social Security Card**

The Social Security card is the second most abused form of identification in the United States. Social Security cards are counterfeited in even greater numbers than birth certificates. As in the case of counterfeit birth certificates, the increased use of counterfeit Social Security cards can be traced to the Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986.

This law led to the use of Social Security cards as a primary means of verifying employment eligibility in the United States. As on the 1-9 form employers are required to fill out for new hires, employment eligibility can be proven by the combination of a Social Security card and driver's license or state identity card.

The law requires the employer to see the Social Security card and driver's license and write down the numbers on them. This is the only verification the employer is required to undertake. The law essentially tells the employers that as long as the documents appear to be real, they must be accepted.

A Social Security card is a unique document because a valid card says two important things about the holder. First, it says he has the right to work in the United States. Second, it implies that the individual is either an American citizen or a foreign national with an immigration status that allows employment in the United States.

The Social Security card has gone through many changes since the first ones were issued in 1935. The first cards were small white paper cards with red printing on them. The original-issue Social Security cards had a legend across the bottom that explicitly stated "Not For identification Purposes." This warning was placed on the bottom of the cards to allay fears that it would be used as a national identity card. This may seem foolish, but one must consider what a radical step the Social Security card was in 1935.

Until the introduction of the Social Security card, most Americans carried no piece of federally issued identification and had no file with any federal agency. The Social Security card changed this. Every American in the labor force now had a federal identification card in their pocket and, most importantly a unique identification number assigned by the federal government. The government now knew where every American lived and where they worked.

To allay fears of a national identity card, the government agreed that the only identifying information that would appear on the card was the name of the individual. No birth date or personal description was allowed. Years later, the only concession to this policy has been the marking of some Social Security cards with the legend "Not Valid For Employment Purposes." These cards are issued to foreign nationals who need U.S. Social Security numbers for tax and banking purposes. The important fact to note is that these numbers are no different from the numbers valid for work purposes. In fact, the onus is on the Social Security Administration to report individuals with not-valid-for-employment numbers to the Immigration Service if payroll deductions are made under the account number.

On the back of the original-issue Social Security card was blue printing that told that holder what to do when they turned sixty-five and retired. This card was issued until the early 1980s, when a new type of Social Security card was distributed.

The second-issue Social Security card was still white, but it was now the same size as a standard identity document. The disclaimer was removed from the bottom. This card, like the one before it, was commonly laminated by most people.

The next change came in the mid-1980s. Partly in reaction to the widespread counterfeiting of Social Security cards, the entire document was changed. The major change was that the document was now printed on safety paper that had a blue pastel background. A warning was also added telling the card owner not to laminate the card under any circumstances. The current-issue card has an alternating background of blue and white. The seal of the Social Security Administration is printed in red ink over the background. The Social Security number and name of the individual are printed in bold computer type. This card style has had numerous small alterations over the years, and some issues have slightly different background colors. Some editions no longer carry the do-not-laminate admonition.

## Part Two: Numbering Schemes

The rapid growth in fraudulent Social Security cards has led to the development of a number of initiatives to prevent people from using numbers that have never been issued or that have been issued to someone else. The Internal Revenue Service in 1995 worked in cooperation with the Social Security Administration to identify the Social Security number supplied on each return. If the Social Security number did not match the name on the return, no tax refund was processed. This program was instituted to prevent illegal immigrants from collecting tax refunds they were not legally entitled to. To understand the power a fraudulent Social Security number can have, we need to see some of the common uses the Social Security number has found.

- In over twenty states, the Social Security number also serves as the driver's license or state ID card number. Once an invalid Social Security number gets on these documents it becomes, by default, a valid number.
- The Social Security number is also used by many educational institutions as an identifier.
- Credit bureaus use the number to create credit histories for consumers.
- Once an individual has appropriated a Social Security number as his own, it takes on a life of its own. To the many government agencies and private corporations that use the number, it now belongs to this person. In a way, we can say that a Social Security number is a person's ticket to American society.

Social Security numbers are composed of three distinct parts. The first three numbers are the **area number**. The state where a person applied for his or her number is reflected here. The middle two numbers are called **group numbers**. Group numbers reveal how far along the Social Security Administration is in issuing a particular area. The last four digits are the **serial number**. The serial number is a sequential number running from 0001 to 9999.

Area numbers that are currently in use are the following:

- 001 to 595
- 600 to 649
- 700 to 728

Any purported Social Security number with an area number outside of these ranges is invalid. Area numbers are assigned to the various states. Larger states, such as New York, are assigned more area numbers than states with smaller populations, like North Dakota. New York is assigned the area numbers from 050 to 134. North Dakota, by contrast, is assigned only the area numbers 501 and 502.

The Social Security number chart at the end of this chapter identifies all active area numbers by their respective states. The area number should be regarded with care when perusing a Social Security card. If a job applicant says he has only lived in Texas all his life, but presents a Social Security card with an area number series from Rhode Island, closer checking is warranted. It is possible the Rhode Island area number was assigned to the applicant when he was a child. It is also possible that his parents were in the military there, or were in Rhode Island for some other reason.

Anyone who presents a Social Security number in the 700 to 728-area band needs to be regarded with suspicion. These area numbers were assigned in only a few limited circumstances. The 700 series of numbers were issued to people in the railroad retirement system in the first half of the century and to some refugees from the Vietnam conflict during the period 1976-1980. Anyone who legitimately has a Social Security number in this range will be either quite elderly or a Southeast Asian refugee.

The group numbers are critical in determining if a number with a correct indicator has been issued, or was issued so long ago as to not belong to the presenter of the card. Group numbers run from 01 to 99. The numbers are not issued in a straight numerical order. An odd-even-odd system is used to assign these numbers. The group numbers assigned for a given area are the odd numbers less than ten. So, groups 01, 03, 05, 07, and 09 would be assigned. Once these groups are used, the even groups over ten are assigned. After this come the even groups less than ten, and finally the odd groups over ten. When the group 99 is reached in a given area, the area is effectively used up.

The last four digits are the sequential serial number. These will range from 0001 to 9999. For every given group within an area number, these 9,999 Social Security numbers can be assigned. By way of example, let us consider the 574 area, which is assigned to the state of Alaska. The very first Social Security number issued in Alaska would have been 574-01-0001. The very last Social Security number that can be issued in Alaska will be 574-99-9999. When this number is reached, the Social Security Administration will be forced to assign new area numbers to Alaska.

How can one determine if a given number has been issued? Let us return to the Alaska example. The highest group number issued to Alaskans is 13. This is an odd group higher than ten, which is the last group number band issued. If a job applicant were to present a Social Security card with the number 574-97-2500, it would be invalid. In fact, the group number is so much higher than the currently assigned numbers that it will not be issued for many, many years.

### **Part Three: Social Security Card Forgery**

The Social Security Administration has attempted to increase the security of the card itself to make counterfeiting harder. As noted earlier, the original card was simply printed on white paper with blue ink. People frequently had them laminated because they were so flimsy. These cards could easily be counterfeited with a copy machine, correction fluid, and blue ink.

The counterfeiter would make a copy of a real card and then blot out the name and number with correction fluid. This card would then be placed on a copy machine, where

blue ink or toner had been substituted for the black ink. The card would then be copied, a new name and number typed in, the card signed, and then laminated. The new card would look as good as the original.

The main problem counterfeiters experience when trying to forge a Social Security card is that they often do not have access to a blank original card. This makes old-fashioned forgery methods very difficult to use. Any removal of information on a completed card with correction fluid will leave an obvious white spot on the background. In fact, the background itself is a problem. When the forger looks at the blue and white background carefully under a magnifying glass, he will see that it is composed of a series of intersecting blue and white discs. The seal is printed on this image.

Because of this, most color printers, even at high resolution, cannot reproduce this image well. It will be obvious that it is a reprint. In fact, even with a high-resolution color laser printer, computer, and scanner, this background is virtually impossible to duplicate well. When these cards are counterfeited, the marbleization is often sloppy and easily detected by a government official who examines real cards on a regular basis.

Additionally, the "Do Not Laminate" warning mentioned earlier was part of a program to educate identification bureaucrats not to accept cards that were laminated. Lamination covers a multitude of sins, and this was a big blow to counterfeiters. If the counterfeiter can find one of the older-style cards, he will use this to complete the forgery. Many millions of people still carry the cards, and the cards are commonly laminated.

If an older card is not available, he can still make a good-quality forgery of the newer-issue card on the computer. The first step is the same, regardless of the type of card that is being counterfeited. A high-resolution scan should be made, but in black and white. The scan needs to be in black and white so the OCR program can be used to remove the text. Now, using the OCR program, the name and Social Security number are carefully lifted off the card. The same is done with the signature line. The background and seal should not be degraded very much as a result of this process.

Next, the now-blank card is imported into the image manipulation program, where software such as Photoshop is used to replace the color on the black and white image. First, the seal is done. The red is replaced, matching it by using the palette function. Then, the blue and white background is replaced. The counterfeiter will not try to match the background exactly, just the overall look. Blue streaks are run across until it is a sea of blue and white. After this is done, color is added to the top and sides.

Now comes the most difficult part for the forger. The Social Security card is a two-sided document with printing on both sides. This must be duplicated in the forgery, and it requires a little sleight of hand. The printing on the back of the card is blue ink on a white background. No changes need to be made to this side of the card. It can be scanned and imported directly into Photoshop. When picking a card backside to scan, the counterfeiter selects one that does not carry the "Do Not Laminate" warning. When this is not possible, he removes the warning with Photoshop. The background is white, so the use of Photoshop to remove the lettering is not obvious.

After removing the text, the front and back sides of the card are printed out. The counterfeiter's sleight of hand in removing the "Do Not Laminate" warning or, alternatively, using an original card back that does not carry the warning, will allow him to laminate the Social Security card forgery. He would follow the same lamination procedure outlined in the chapter concerning driver's licenses, again using the small paper cutter to trim the forgery and the glue stick to hold everything in place. The heat-laminating machine that the counterfeiter has purchased will use a lamination pouch to laminate the card.

After the card is signed, it is inserted into the pouch and, when the machine has reached the correct temperature, the pouch is inserted into the machine. Thirty seconds later, the counterfeiter has a Social Security card that can be used for most purposes.

The counterfeit cards will not pass the scrutiny of government officials, but they will satisfy the Immigration Law requirements. As a result, employers have become silent agents and provocateurs in the false Social Security card market. Most employers in areas with large numbers of illegal immigrants know that these documents are false, but they accept them anyway. Why? They can pay lower wages to the holders of these documents.

## **Social Security Area Number Groups**

The chart below shows the first three digits of the Social Security numbers assigned throughout the United States and its possessions.

001-003	New Hampshire
004-007	Maine
008-009	Vermont
010-034	Massachusetts
035-039	Rhode Island
040-049	Connecticut
050-134	New York
135-158	New Jersey
159-211	Pennsylvania
212-220	Maryland
221-222	Delaware
223-231	Virginia
691-699*	
232-236	West Virginia
232	North Carolina
237-246	
681-690*	
247-251	South Carolina
654-658	
252-260	Georgia
667-675	
261-267	Florida
589-595	
268-302	Ohio
303-317	Indiana
318-361	Illinois
362-386	Michigan
387-399	Wisconsin
400-407	Kentucky
408-415	Tennessee
756-763*	
416-424	Alabama
425-428	Mississippi
587	
588*	
752-755*	

429-432	Arkansas
676-679*	
433-439	Louisiana
659-665*	
440-448	Oklahoma
449-467	Texas
627-645	
468-477	Minnesota
478-485	Iowa
486-500	Missouri
501-502	North Dakota
503-504	South Dakota
505-508	Nebraska
509-515	Kansas
516-517	Montana
518-519	Idaho
520	Wyoming
521-524	Colorado
650-653*	
525,585	New Mexico
648-649	
526-527	Arizona
600-601	
528-529	Utah
646-647	
530	Nevada
680*	
531-539	Washington
540-544	Oregon
545-573	California
602-626	
574	Alaska
575-576	Hawaii
750-751*	
577-579	District of Columbia
580	Virgin Islands
580-584	Puerto Rico
596-599	
586	Guam
586	American Samoa
586	Philippine Islands
700-728	Railroad Board**

**NOTE:** The same area number, when shown more than once, means that certain numbers have been transferred from one State to another, or that an area number has been divided for use among certain geographic locations. Any number beginning with 000 will NEVER be a valid Social Security number.

\* = New area numbers allocated, but not yet issued

\*\* 700-728 Issuance of these numbers to railroad employees was discontinued July 1, 1963.



## Chapter Eight

# Other Document Forgery

### Part One: Reference Letters

Reference letters are another type of document the identity changer will need early in the creation of another identity. Fortunately for counterfeiters, these are easy to fake and even easier to backstop. An experienced forger knows to always backstop a forged document if possible. A forged letter of reference from a major corporation that can be disproved with a simple telephone call is not worth doing.

Backstopping forged documents makes them more useful, and avoids potential nasty surprises. Backstopping an employment reference letter involves no more than having a telephone number and address where a potential employer can call or write for more information. This can be easily set up by renting a mail drop address and a voice mail telephone number. On the voice mail telephone number, the counterfeiter would simply record a message stating that no one is in the office now, but to leave a message and the call will be returned later. For an added dash of realism, the forger could rent an answering service telephone number for a few months and have a live person take the message.

The employment reference is usually created in a city far away from where the counterfeiter will be living under his new identity, thus avoiding the possibility that the potential new employer will recognize the address as a mail drop or realize that the company is not operating in the local area.

The forger has two choices when it comes to creating employment reference letters. One option is the creation of a dummy corporation. This is easy. A name is chosen, and a quick printer is employed to make professional letterhead. Quick printers have standard logos and letterhead formats available and can create your new company in a matter of hours.

If a reference letter from an established firm is desired, a letterhead from that company must first be obtained. This, too, is easily done. The forger can write to the public affairs department of the company asking for information about the number of employees and annual sales. His cover story could be that he is doing a report on the company. A few weeks later he will receive a letter from the public affairs department along with a ton of other information. He now has the all-important corporate letterhead. A letter of reference from this company can now be forged by either the old-fashioned or the computer method.

The old-fashioned way would involve the forger first making a photocopy of the letter. This would become the work copy. He would then use correction fluid to remove the writing on the letter. If there is a lot of text, he can cut a sheet of white paper to size so that it covers the writing. This letter is photocopied again and, presto, he now has a blank letterhead from this company.

The computer method is even easier. The original letter is scanned and imported directly into the OCR program. The text is removed and the blank letter saved. The forger can create his new reference letter anytime with a word-processing program.

## Part Two: Transcripts

College transcripts are another document the new identity seeker will need early in the identity creation process. The college transcript is actually more important than the degree itself. Frequently, employers will request that a job applicant submit transcripts with a resume. The transcript is the official verification of the degree. A transcript will contain a chronological listing of courses taken, grades received, grade point average, and degrees awarded.

Transcripts are issued in two forms, certified and uncertified. An uncertified transcript is frequently given to students. This will contain the courses taken and grades received, but it is not an official record of academic performance. A certified transcript contains the same information, but it bears the signature of the college registrar and the embossed seal of the college. This is an official record of academic performance.

The first problem that the forger of academic records will face is getting an actual sample to work from. There is a simple method that will procure a sample of any school's transcript. But, before we discuss this method, we need to examine some cautions the forger must take into account.

The forger must always be aware of the limitations of his forged documents. A transcript forgery of excellent quality can be disproved by one telephone call to the registrar's office of the college concerned. This fact must always be kept in mind.

One way to sidestep discovery is to avoid certain well-known universities. Employers are more likely to personally verify a person who claims a degree from Harvard or Yale than a person who claims a degree from a state university. Forgers should avoid producing fake transcripts from the following schools:

- Harvard
- Johns-Hopkins
- MIT
- Princeton
- Stanford
- UCLA
- UC-Berkeley
- Vanderbilt
- Yale

There are other schools that should be avoided, but the general rule is clear: Claiming a degree from a well-respected state university, backed up by a good-quality transcript forgery, will usually get the forger a job without any checking of references.

Another tip transcript counterfeiters usually adhere to is to choose a university or college located far from where they intend to live under the new identity. This tends to minimize the risk that they will come across a boss or co-worker who actually attended the school from which the forger claims a degree.

The counterfeiter should also avoid claiming professional degrees in the medical, legal, and dental fields. People in these professions are heavily regulated and licensed, and a fake will be detected quickly.

Also to be avoided is for the forger to claim a Ph.D. in any other field. A doctoral degree means that the holder has completed a dissertation containing original research and knowledge. The abstracts of most doctoral dissertations are available on computer indexes and in reference works easily consulted at major libraries. Frequently, employers who hire folks who hold a Ph.D. will request them to submit a copy of the abstract of their research.

Finally, experienced forgers do not claim a degree in a subject area where they have no knowledge. Even if they take a job as a car salesman, and get the job only in part because they are supposed to have a degree in physics, they know that this is dangerous. One day their boss or colleagues may ask them for the answer to a scientific question they have. If the forger cannot answer it, it may start raising doubts about the veracity of his resume.

With these conditions in mind, what follows is an outline of how genuine samples of university or college transcripts are inexpensively obtained by document forgers. Every college and university has a student newspaper. Advertisements can be placed in the student paper at very low cost, and the forger will reach exactly the target audience he wants, that is, someone with a degree from that school

An ad is placed for a job with a cover company set up at a mail drop in a far away city as mentioned in the previous chapter on driver's licenses. A starting salary is offered for the job that is at least 25 percent higher than normal. In the ad, the applicants are asked to submit resumes, references, and a certified copy of their academic transcript. It might even be mentioned that all documents will be returned. The ad might read something like this:

***"Engineers and physicists of all types urgently needed by XYZ Corporation. Starting salaries from \$40,000 to \$75,000 per year plus benefits, depending on experience and academic record. Please submit resume, references, and academic transcripts to: Mr. E. Johnson, XYZ Corporation, 13 Parker Lane, Honolulu, HI 98775.-"***

This ad would be run at each university from which the forger wishes to obtain a sample transcript. Some universities frequently have job bulletin boards in various departments where anyone can post a job advertisement. If so, the forger can avail himself of this option as well. Within a few weeks, his mailbox will be overflowing with transcripts.

Transcripts can be duplicated by both methods, and there is very little difference between making transcript forgeries and making false birth certificates. The only additional item the counterfeiter needs to acquire is an embosser with the university seal on it. Once again, the previously mentioned methods for obtaining an embossing tool will work here. Most other paper documents such as award certificates, etc., can be forged by the same method. The forger always attempts to obtain an original from which to work.

### **Part Three: Certificates of Military Service**

One last paper document that the identity-changer needs to obtain is a certificate of military service. This document really consists of two forms. The first is the certificate of military service itself. This is a typical certificate that attests that the individual named served honorably in the U.S. military. The document itself is strictly lightweight. You can easily purchase one from a mail-order vendor. The important form is the DD-214. The DD stands for Discharge Document. This is the heavyweight form, and the form that employers want to see when they hire a veteran. The DD-214 contains details of the individual's dates and branch of service, rank obtained, honors, and service schools attended. Employers are specifically instructed to accept this form without question from veterans. It is issued by the Defense Department, and easily duplicated by either method.

A sample of either one of these forms can be obtained by a forger by going to his local veteran's employment office and posting a job opening notice. He would ask that the applicants submit a copy of their DD-214 with the application.

Forgers are cautious if claiming military service. Hundreds of thousands of people are discharged and retired from the military each year. There is a very good chance that, if

a forger claims prior military service to obtain a job, his boss or co-workers will have also served in the military. Military life involves its own lingo, way of doing things, and other distinctive characteristics. If the forger is unfamiliar with these aspects of military life, he will quickly be exposed as a fraud.

## Chapter Nine

# Safe Uses of Forged Identification

We need to take a quick look at how and where forged documents can be safely used, and when they should absolutely never be used. Part of the document forger's art is to know the time and place he can use his wares.

The creation of a new identity will always involve a forged birth certificate unless the individual is using the actual identity of a child who died at a young age. One big disadvantage of creating an identity this second way is that there is no certainty that another person searching for a new identity will not pick up on this same identity. Then, serious legal problems can befall the forger that will probably involve a stay in jail or prison.

A well-done birth certificate is one of the few cases where a forged document is just as good or better than the real item. Unless a document clerk has a reason to believe that the birth certificate is a forgery, no verification procedures will be taken to ascertain its authenticity. Identity-changers know to always go well prepared when seeking identity documents so that no questions will be raised in the minds of clerks as to their honesty.

The same is true about forged Social Security cards. Unless the holder is collecting welfare or other entitlements, no one is too interested in verifying his Social Security number. A few states, such as Washington and Alabama, no longer require Social Security numbers when applying for driver's licenses and state identity cards. Many states that do require the numbers do so only to verify that someone else in the database is not already using that number. Ohio is one such state that only uses the number for this purpose. A few states use the Social Security number as the license number, although the trend is now reversing itself thanks to rampant identity / credit theft.

A fake driver's license or identification card should never be presented to a police officer unless it is a duplicate of a valid license or card. However, fake licenses can be used to obtain employment, open bank accounts, rent an apartment, and establish credit without any repercussions.

The identity-changer, of course, wants to replace the fake documents with real ones as soon as possible. The only long-term fake documents the new identity-seeker should use are birth certificates, college transcripts, and Social Security cards. All other documents should be the real item. But even with college transcripts, some care must be taken. As previously mentioned, forgers know never to claim legal, medical, or dental degrees.

One way a forger can turn a fake degree into a real one is to use his forged transcript to get admitted to a graduate degree program at a university. If the forger possesses the undergraduate knowledge, he faces no problem obtaining the graduate degree. If the identity-changer needs a degree to obtain a job, he should consider going to a university via correspondence or at night to obtain a real degree in the necessary field. After the real degree is obtained, he can dispense with the false transcript.

Some jobs require that the applicant undergo a background investigation. The person attempting to establish a new identity needs to know which of these investigations his forgeries will pass, and which they will not.

Investigations consist of two types, passive and active. A passive investigation involves a search for negative information, such as a criminal record or bad credit. A user of new identity who has a real driver's license, a backstopped employment reference, and high-quality forged transcript can pass most passive investigations. Most state governments

and private employers will check your driving record and credit history, call your last employer, and check for a criminal record. If these checks come back clear, you have passed the screening.

Jobs requiring a federal government security clearance involve much more. A ton of personal references will need to be provided, and FBI agents will attempt to verify every document and every line of the personal history. This is an active investigation, and a forged identity will not pass. The seeker of a new identity should not apply for these jobs. In sum, the forger who keeps these facts in mind will be able to use his forged documents without fear of detection.

# Appendix One

## State Vital Records Offices

### Births, Deaths, Marriages, and Divorces

As part of its mission to provide access to data and information relating to the health of the Nation, the National Center for Health Statistics produces a number of publications containing reference and statistical materials. The purpose of this publication is solely to provide information about individual vital records maintained only on file in State or local vital statistics offices.

An official certificate of every birth, death, marriage, and divorce should be on file in the locality where the event occurred. The Federal Government does not maintain files or indexes of these records. These records are filed permanently either in a State vital statistics office or in a city, county, or other local office.

To obtain a certified copy of any of the certificates, write or go to the vital statistics office in the State or area where the event occurred. Addresses and fees are given for each event in the State or area concerned.

To ensure that you receive an accurate record for your request and that your request is filled expeditiously, please follow the steps outlined below for the information in which you are interested:

- Write to the appropriate office to have your request filled.
- Under the appropriate office, information has been included for birth and death records concerning whether the State will accept checks or money orders and to whom they should be made payable. This same information would apply when marriage and divorce records are available from the State office. However, it is impossible for us to list fees and addresses for all county offices where marriage and divorce records may be obtained.
- For all certified copies requested, make check or money order payable for the correct amount for the number of copies you want to obtain. Cash is not recommended because the office cannot refund cash lost in transit.

- Because all fees are subject to change, a telephone number has been included in the information for each State for use in verifying the current fee.
- Some States have provided their home page address for obtaining current information.
- Type or print all names and addresses in the letter.
- Give the following facts when writing for birth or death records:

1. Full name of person whose record is being requested.
2. Sex.
3. Parents' names, including maiden name of mother.
4. Month, day, and year of birth or death.
5. Place of birth or death (city or town, county, and State; and name of hospital, if known).
6. Purpose for which copy is needed.
7. Relationship to person whose record is being requested.

- Give the following facts when writing for marriage records:

1. Full names of bride and groom.
2. Month, day, and year of marriage.
3. Place of marriage (city or town, county, and State).
4. Purpose for which copy is needed.
5. Relationship to persons whose record is being requested.

- Give the following facts when writing for divorce records:

1. Full names of husband and wife.
2. Date of divorce or annulment.
3. Place of divorce or annulment.
4. Type of final decree.
5. Purpose for which copy is needed.
6. Relationship to persons whose record is being requested.

## Appendix Two

### Two-Digit State-Issue Codes used on United States Birth Certificates

Alabama	01
Arizona	02
Arkansas	03
California	04
Colorado	05
Connecticut	06
Delaware	07
District of Columbia	08
Florida	09
Georgia	10
Idaho	11
Illinois	12
Indiana	13
Iowa	14
Kansas	15
Kentucky	16
Louisiana	17
Maine	18
Maryland	19
Massachusetts	20
Michigan	21
Minnesota	22
Mississippi	23
Missouri	24
Montana	25
Nebraska	26
Nevada	27
New Hampshire	28
New Jersey	29
New Mexico	30
New York	31
North Carolina	32
North Dakota	33
Ohio	34
Oklahoma	35



Oregon	36
Pennsylvania	37
Rhode Island	38
South Carolina	39
South Dakota	40
Tennessee	41
Texas	42
Utah	43
Vermont	44
Virginia	45
Washington	46
West Virginia	47
Wisconsin	48
Wyoming	49
Alaska	50
Hawaii	51
American Samoa	52
Guam	53
Puerto Rico	54
U.S. Virgin Islands	55

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